

GAME FACE

INDIANS SPORTS MAGAZINE

Mr. Style
Omar Vizquel

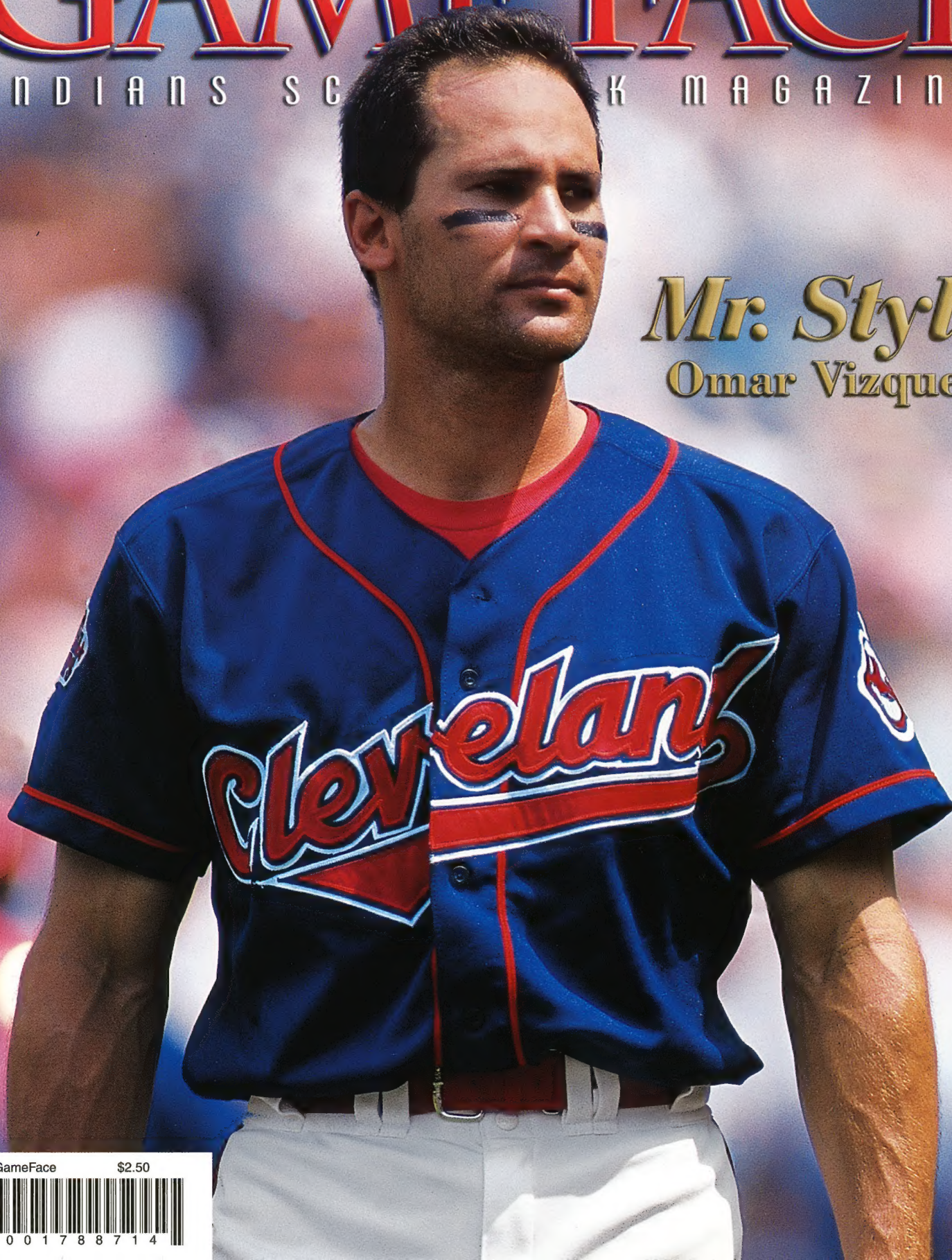


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

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SPECIAL FEATURES ...

10 CHEERS FOR HAL, THE INDUCTEE by Yank Poleyeff

Longtime Cleveland Sportswriter Hal Lebovitz is among the most recent writers/broadcasters to be chosen to join the hallowed ranks of those in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Writing since the '40s, Hal has also been a teacher, coach, and sports official.

36 STYLE POINTS by Bill Needle

Some people are just meant for the spotlight. Indians shortstop Omar Vizquel fields baseballs the way he does everything in life – with style. The best fielding shortstop in baseball is also an entrepreneur, artist, musician, and comedian.

46 OLD SCHOOL BASEBALL by Jim Ingraham

Dependable, consistent, solid. That's Tribe third baseman Travis Fryman. Year-in and year-out, he turns in the kind of performances a winning team can't live without. And he does it quietly, without flash. He's "old school."

62 THE ALIEN by Bill Needle

He must be from another planet – or made of microchips. His Indians teammates marvel at catcher Einar Diaz's seemingly endless endurance and constant smile. Diaz is also showing tremendous growth and great potential behind the plate.

66 Heroes, Myths, Legends, and Dreams Await You in Cooperstown... by Tom and Joanne O'Toole

Baseball's Hall of Fame is a magical place to visit. The small town in which it rests is also a treasure – a history-filled slice of apple pie.



MORE FOR YOU ...

Welcome!	6
www.indians.com	8
Ballpark Diagram	20
2000 Indians Schedule	22
Promotional Events	22
Jacobs Field	24
Ground Rules	
Indians in the Community	26-30, 98
Baseball Operations & Minor Leagues	32-33
<i>(includes 2000 Season Schedules of local Indians affiliates)</i>	
Ballpark Concessions	34
Scoring Blocks/ You Can Score The Game	52-54
Béisbol en Español	56
Cleveland Indians License Plates	68
Now You Can Call Your Own Game (at the FanCast Booth)	70
American League/National League Directory	76
Indians Broadcasters	80-82
Indians Radio & Television Network	86
Friday Lunch Parties at the Terrace Club at Jacobs Field	88
Slider's 10th Birthday Party	90
2000 Cleveland Indians	93
Indians Online Auctions	99
Slider's Fun and Games	100-101

Style Points

by *Bill Needle*



Photo: Gregory Drezdon



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

If baseball had never been invented, chances are Omar Vizquel would still be a famous man. When presented with that thought, Vizquel smiles and briefly looks to the ground.

It is an appropriate glance. His current fame is directly related to the ground. His ability to field baseballs rolling, bouncing, and skidding along good old terra firma has given him an international reputation. He is clearly one of the three best-fielding shortstops who have ever played the game, popular among the fans, and revered by those who play with and against him.

But Vizquel's next look is skyward. "You know, what I'd really like to do is learn how to skydive. Jump out of airplanes. What a great feeling that must be."

While Charlie Manuel would probably jump out of a plane without a parachute before he'd let Vizquel do so, Omar's wish to skydive speaks volumes about him. For Omar Vizquel, life's experiences are a smorgasboard and he's got a tapeworm. Or, as Mame Dennis said in the Broadway classic, *Auntie*

Mame, "Life is a banquet. And most poor sons-of-guns are starving."

Even the larger-than-life Indians, whom we fans know in just one dimension, have varied interests. Pitchers Jim Brower, Dave Burba, and Scott Kamieniecki love crossword puzzles. Sandy Alomar, who has had a lifelong love of engines and vehicles, will occasionally send a radio-powered mini-car around the warning track of Jacobs Field. Ping-pong is a popular pastime for a number of the Tribesmen. But none has the range of interests Vizquel does.

There's his tireless humanitarian work for the flood victims of his native Venezuela. There's his painting. And his fashion design. And his sketching. Of course, there's his salsa – in mild, medium, and hot. There's his standup comedy; he appeared on Comedy Central TV during the '96 All-Star break. And his jet-skiing. Don't forget his drumming, either. Or his weekly TV show for kids, "Omar y Amigos." Throw in his desire to jump out of airplanes and his innate hunger to succeed at whatever he does, and it's easy

to understand why one would suggest Vizquel might have found fame had baseball never been invented.

"I'm a really active guy. I have to keep my mind active all the time," Vizquel says when asked about his varied interests. "I'm not the type of guy who likes to sit around and watch a movie, or sit around and listen to music for too long. I mean, I can do it, but 20 minutes, 25 minutes and I'm already bored and I have to do something else."

"I'm the outdoor type of guy. I like to be running, hiking, sweating, biking, skateboarding. Just a little bit of everything. You can see my body's all covered with scars just because of that. When I was a kid, it was hard for me to stay in the house."

"I had a lot of problems with my family and even my teachers because I couldn't sit down for too long."

Vizquel's restlessness can be seen on the ballfield, as well.

"I'd swear he gets antsy when a guy's pitching a great game and he doesn't get any ground balls," says

Tony Tomsic, a nationally-known, Cleveland-based photographer whose favorite subject is Vizquel. "By the seventh inning, if he hasn't had any action, it looks to me like he's going out of his mind wanting something in his direction.

"He's just a bundle of energy. You can see it, of course, when he's in action. But I watch him a lot between pitches and you can see his energy when he's not in action, too."

**"I SAW PEOPLE
BREAK DOWN AND
START CRYING RIGHT
IN FRONT OF ME
JUST BECAUSE THEY
HAD GOTTEN A LITTLE
SANDWICH TO EAT."**

***Omar Vizquel on the
flood and mudflow
devastation in his native
Venezuela***

Every Indians fan knows what Vizquel can do when he directs his energy toward a grounder behind second base. Fewer know what happens when he directs that energy toward a more serious project; the WorldVision relief efforts in Venezuela. After the horrific flood and mudflow of last December, fatalities from the catastrophe exceeded 35,000. Vizquel was deeply involved with raising money for relief.

"The guy raised over \$600,000 for his country," says Bart Swain, Indians Director of Media Relations. "He's as genuine as they come. Some look for the praise, but not Omar. He's real."

Not only did Vizquel spend last January on relief work in Venezuela, he also organized a charity softball game to bring in even more money.

"I wanted to help in any way I could, Vizquel says. "When I saw that they needed so much done, I offered myself.



Photo: Gregory Drezdon

"It was hard to believe what I saw when I went to Caracas. There were still dead bodies in there. It was real sad. Everybody knew somebody who died. The destruction was awful, too. I went to some of the neighborhoods where some of my friends lived, and they were completely wiped out. One of the most horrible things, and one of the things that needed the most money, was the psychology work for the people who survived, for the kids who lost parents and relatives. And for the grown-ups who lost children.

"To see their faces..." Vizquel's voice trails off. "I saw people break down and start crying right in front of me just because they had gotten a little sandwich to eat."

Vizquel's compassion was nurtured in a stable, loving home in Caracas. His father, Omar, Sr., and mother, Eucaris, raised three children, of which Omar, Jr. is the oldest. Brother, Carlos, a

graphic designer, is four years younger than Vizquel's 33 years, and sister Gabriella, a kindergarten teacher, is 19.

"Our neighborhood had apartments and single-family houses," says Vizquel about growing up in Caracas. "There were a lot of kids growing up all around. We weren't rich, it was a lower class atmosphere, but we'd usually gather together and have at least one meal as a family every day.

"It was happiness. There was happiness all around us. We knew everybody in the neighborhood; moms, dads, relatives, everybody. There were no problems with anybody hanging around at three o'clock in the morning in the street.

"All of us were very close. The kids in our neighborhood got help from everybody. Right now, guys from our neighborhood are doctors, engineers, and we are so happy we can see people who have had success. We even have a

United States and meet a bunch of new people and compete to earn a job playing shortstop outweighed the tough things.

"I knew signing would open a lot of doors and a big league shortstop was what I wanted to be ever since I was a kid."

Plenty of kids from Caracas to San Pedro de Macoris to Shaker Heights, OH have wanted to be big league shortstops. Just as many want to be artists or musicians. Only Vizquel has managed to find the intersection of all three.

"I always liked to draw," he says, "but I never started painting until I was 23, 24 years old. Just mixing up the colors, having the opportunity to have friends who paint a little bit, it opened my mind to the artistic world."

**"YOU NEVER KNOW
THE THINGS YOU
CAN DO UNTIL YOU
TRY . . . THAT'S
THE WAY I LOOK
AT LIFE."**

Omar Vizquel

"As for artists I like, I like Dali because his work is deep. There's a meaning beyond what you see. And I like Peter Max. I like his use of colors, and there's a vibrancy to his work."

"Right now, I'm doing my best to improve my painting because I haven't taken any courses. Everything I know and do, I know from the heart."

There's a consistency to Vizquel. At shortstop, he's bold and flashy. His barehand plays on slow bounding balls have become his trademark. His car is a canary yellow sports car and many of his clothes are brightly colored, bordering on loud. The same with his art.

The labels of his "Omar Vizquel Salsa" contain reproductions of his original paintings. One, titled "Fiesta," is a combination of yellows, blues, reds, and white, suggesting enough motion



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

that the label actually seems to soar off the bottle.

"I've talked with some people who know a lot more about art than I do," says Allen Davis, the Tribe's Director of Community Relations and Spanish play-by-play voice, "and they say he's actually pretty good, that his use of color and broad brush work could make him a serious artist if he stays with it."

Yet as much as Vizquel applies himself to his art, there are still many other things he wants to do. Like playing the drums. Those attending the "TribeJam" fund raiser at Nautica last fall saw an Indians band made up of lead singer Dave Burba, Mark Langston and Richie Sexson on guitars, Jim Thome on tambourine and gong – and Vizquel on drums.

"Drums I know from the heart, too," he says. "I hear a song and I like it. I listen to it, the drums part, and then I try to remake it myself. I try to imitate what I hear. Just try to make it perfect."

Vizquel's newest creative endeavor is a line of fashions for men and women that had its debut in late May with a show at a suburban mall. As with his painting, Vizquel's swimsuit and casual wear designs are bright, bold, and striking.

"I got into the design last year," he says. "I had an opportunity with this guy, I guess he liked the way I dress and he came up with the idea. If you have a friend who can guide you in the right direction when you want to try new things, why not?"

"You never know the things you can do until you try. Just like a barehand play. So many people say, 'Why do you do it?' Well, how do you know you can do it unless you try it?"

"That's the way I look at life. You have to try new stuff in order for you to survive."

It doesn't hurt Vizquel's quest for new experiences that he's fearless. Called "The Earthquake" as a child because of a disregard for his own safety,

few friends from the neighborhood who are politicians."

And Omar Vizquel plays baseball. Another link in the chain of brilliant Venezuelan shortstops that begins with Alfonso "Chico" Carrasquel and boasts names like Aparicio, Concepcion, Guillen and, now, Vizquel.

Playing baseball was the only thing Omar ever wanted to do with his life.

"My family always knew I wanted to be a baseball player and that was my main thing," he says. "I sacrificed many hours practicing baseball. My mom took me to the baseball parks on busses so I could play. She knew there was something special about me and baseball when I'd go to sleep with my uniform on because I'd have an early game the next morning.

"My dad played baseball and soccer, so he knew how much I loved baseball. But even my mother knew baseball was my thing."

Born in May, 1967, Vizquel was learning to love the game at the time Cincinnati's "Big Red Machine" was dominating the National League during the '70s. For a young shortstop growing up in Caracas, there was only one role model, the Reds Venezuelan shortstop, Dave Concepcion.

"Davey Concepcion was my hero growing up," Vizquel says.

"THE ONLY REASON I AGREED TO GO PLAY IN BUTTE, MT IS I HAD NO IDEA WHERE BUTTE WAS."

Omar Vizquel joking about his first taste of baseball in the U.S.

"BEING A BALLPLAYER LIKE CONCEPCION, THAT WAS IT FOR ME."

Omar Vizquel

"I have two pictures. One is me when I was a kid, posing next to Davey Concepcion and the other one is me as a Major Leaguer, standing next to him in the same pose. I show them side by side.

"Being a ballplayer like Concepcion, that was it for me."

An average student at Francisco Espejo High School in Venezuela's capital, Vizquel also played on the basketball team.

"I didn't get to play very much," he remembers. "I guess the coach didn't

like the way I played, so I gave it up to play baseball all the time.

"Funny thing. Years later, when I made it to the big leagues, the basketball coach who didn't like me called me up and asked for free tickets."

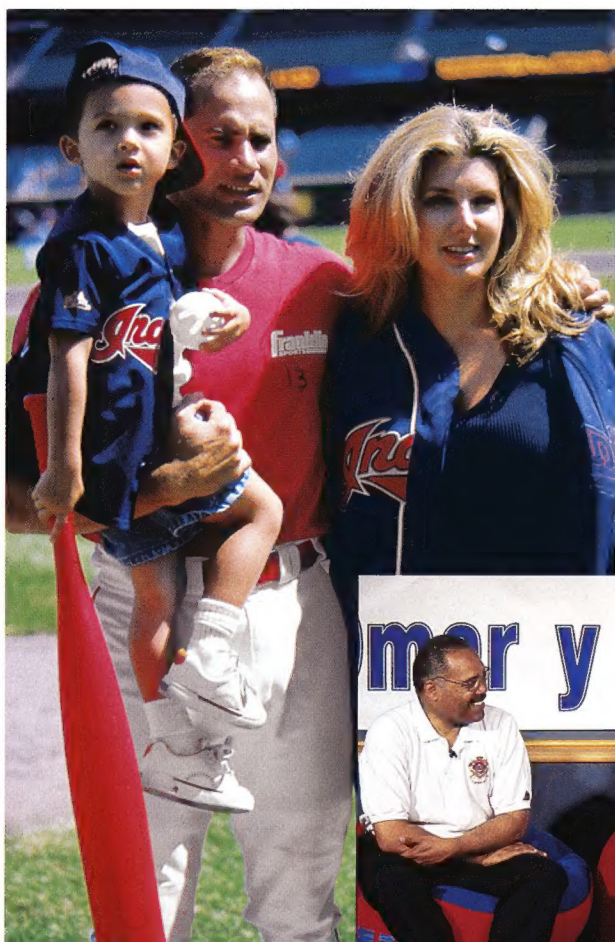
Vizquel left Caracas at the age of 16, signed by the Mariners as a free agent. His first destination was Butte, MT, home of Seattle's rookie league team.

"The only reason I agreed to go play in Butte, MT is I had no idea where Butte was," he says with a laugh. "If I had known what it was like, I would never have signed. I was cold all the time. They had all us Latin players living together in the same house, so that wasn't a good way to learn English. I had to hang out with the English-speaking players so I could learn the language.

"But the thing of playing baseball, the opportunity to sign your first professional contract, to come to the



Photo: Gregory Drezdson



Vizquel may be older and wiser than in his "Earthquake" period, but he's clearly up for any new challenge that crosses his high-speed path.

"I don't have fear about anything," he says. "I can try anything and I'm not afraid. Like what I said about parachuting. Maybe I won't try it while I'm still playing baseball, but after I retire, that's my main goal. And I know I won't be afraid."

But it's not his fashion designs, his painting, his drumming – or even his salsa – that makes Omar a popular member of the Indians. As brilliant as he may be at shortstop, it's not really even his fielding, or hitting, that has made him so popular.

There's more to Vizquel than the sum of his many parts. For all his interests and accomplishments, it's the intangibles – the manner, the style, the flair – that make him one of Cleveland's most recognizable and beloved citizens.

"I'm pretty down to earth," he says. "I usually understand where everybody's coming from."

"I was never a shy person. Even in school, I was never shy. And now that I'm around people all the time, forty-thousand fans every night and a lot of TV cameras and radio, it makes me feel good to be out there. I don't have any problem talking to a camera or commenting to a radio show or telling a

few jokes. It's a part of my life – and I enjoy doing everything I do.

"Maybe people see that in me. The enjoyment."

Maybe they do. But even if they don't see Vizquel's enjoyment of his life and work, there's plenty of enjoyment that comes just from watching him play. And although he hit a career-best .333 last season, it's still his defense that draws raves.

"I compare Omar's defense to Ken Griffey's offensive skills," says Jim Thome. "It looks like he's not even trying. To play the way he does takes a lot of confidence and a lot of talent."

Nobody's going to have to worry about Omar Vizquel finding things to do once his playing days are over. Between parachuting and jet skiing, painting and fashion design, standup comedy and drumming, Omar's plate will be overflowing with activities.

And with hands like his, he won't have to worry about dropping that plate, either.



The faces of Omar . . . frequently smiling and enjoying those around him. Top: Omar and wife, Nicole, with their son, Nicholas. Directly above: Omar entertains his youthful audience and his co-host Allen Davis (Tribe Director of Community Relations) and guest player Jolbert Cabrera) during his Omar y Amigos program. At right: drawing laughs during batting practice.

**"I WAS NEVER
A SHY PERSON."**

**"I ENJOY DOING
EVERYTHING
I DO."**

Omar Vizquel



All photos: Gregory Drezdson

Old School



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

BASEBALL

by Jim Ingraham

Travis Fryman is so old school that when the Indians take road trips, Travis ought to take a train.

Which way to the '50s?

Even his name sounds like an old-time ballplayer: Travis Fryman. How many guys do you know named "Travis?" It sounds like the name of some infielder from the Deep South, which is fitting, because that's exactly what Fryman is.

He keeps his hair short, and always neatly combed. He's ridiculously polite and engaging. On the field he is more efficient than flashy. Much more.

He likes it that way. He's old school.

Unlike many professional athletes, Fryman doesn't think his name should always be in capital letters. As far as he's concerned, he isn't TRAVIS FRYMAN! He's Travis Fryman, a member of the Cleveland Indians. And the second part of the equation is probably more important to Fryman than the first.

This is a man who takes his baseball seriously, and expects everyone around him to do the same.

"The best thing anyone can say about you at the end of your career," says the Indians third baseman, "is that 'He played the game the right way, and he was a good teammate.' "

See?

You can't get any more *old school* than that.

It's not about me, it's about us. The team. It's about showing respect to the game and your teammates. It's about playing the game right. And it's about pulling together for the common good.

"This might sound kind of funny," says Fryman. "But to me it's almost more important how you play the game than whether you win or lose. I'd rather play on a team that tries to play the game right and tries to play together as a team, but loses, than play on a team that doesn't do any of that, but wins."

You want to get Fryman riled up? Play baseball poorly.

"Baseball is meant to be fun," he says. "But it's only fun when it's played right. Nothing is more miserable than to play baseball the wrong way.

"I'm not talking about making mistakes. We all make mistakes. I've made more than my share, myself. I don't mind mistakes. What I don't like is when mistakes are repeated. The whole point of making a mistake is that it gives you the opportunity to learn from it."

Fryman has thought a lot about stuff like this. He's *old school*. His baseball career isn't just some high-paying hobby. It's his job. You take your job seriously – and so does Fryman.

Photo: Gregory Drezdson



There may be no more thoughtful or introspective player in the Indians clubhouse than the 31-year-old Fryman, who came out of Northern Florida 10 years ago as something of a baseball prodigy.

Fryman was actually born in Lexington, KY, and spent the first three years of his life just down the river from Cincinnati, where the Reds were putting together the pieces of the famous Big Red Machine that would terrorize the National League in the 1970s.

"My mother used to kid that I could name the Reds entire starting lineup when I was three years old," said Fryman.

His father was a huge Reds fan, and, as his son would in later years, he too took baseball seriously.

"We moved to Florida when I was three years old, and one of the reasons was that my father thought they had really good Little League programs in North Florida," Fryman said.

In 1985, Fryman became the starting shortstop at Tate High School in Pensacola, FL. The shortstop at Tate High that Fryman replaced was Jay Bell, who played with the Indians from

1986-88, and later went on to play for the Pirates, Royals, and Diamondbacks.

Fryman's father was the basketball coach at Tate, but Travis wasn't interested in basketball.

"I always say I didn't play because I didn't like the coach," he jokes.

"Actually though, to excel in basketball you have to really be a gym rat. I didn't have the passion for that game that I had for baseball."

It was during this time that Fryman began to develop the work ethic and the mature, unflinching approach to the game that he still exhibits to this day.

"I was raised as a coach's son, so I was taught to be coachable, and always had stressed to me the importance of practicing the game right," he says.

Fryman's respect for the game of baseball was also nurtured shortly after the Tigers selected him with a sandwich pick between the first and second rounds of the 1987 June Amateur Draft.

Fryman needed just three full Minor League seasons to make it to the big leagues, where, at age 21, he made his Major League debut as a shortstop on July 7, 1990 under Tigers Hall of Fame



manager Sparky Anderson, the manager of the Big Red Machine Fryman idolized as a youth.

"I think one of the reasons I learned to respect the game so much is because of Sparky," Fryman says. "He teaches that to all his players."

Fryman was in a unique position as a rookie. He was joining a Tigers team that was filled with veterans. Players like Alan Trammell, Lou Whitaker, Jack Morris, and Lance Parrish dominated the Tigers with their personalities as much as with their talent.

"I think one of the reasons I like to talk to young players today about the game is that when I came up to the

Tigers as a rookie, I was the only young player on the team," Fryman said. "There were a lot of veterans who helped me on that club. So you want to

pass on what you learn. You're SUPPOSED to. That's the way baseball is."

Indeed, Fryman says he embraces the notion of his moving into the latter years of his career, where he can serve as sort of an elder statesman to younger players.

"I remember when Alan Trammell retired from the Tigers," he says. "He said to me, 'All right, Travis. It's your team now.' I mean, we discussed it."

"Back then, it was necessary to put in your time under the older players to learn the game. You learned how to address issues among yourselves as players. Sometimes the manager didn't even have to get involved. That was very important back then. To become an older veteran and to take on a role like that – I had been waiting for that day my whole career."

Fryman had also paid some dues.

He'd grown up as a ballplayer, and as a man. You'd never know it now, by watching his consistently calm, professional demeanor on the field. But when Fryman first arrived in the big leagues with the Tigers, he was a raging volcano.

"I had a terrible temper," he said. "A lot of bat throwing, cursing. Immaturity really became a problem for me."

A problem Anderson tried to help Fryman with.

"Sparky would point out to me that exploding like that and throwing equipment didn't show respect for your teammates or coaches, because those dugouts at Tiger Stadium were so small, if you threw a tantrum you could hurt somebody," Fryman says. Sparky also told me that it takes a lot of energy to display your emotions like that, and if you keep it up all year, by the end of the season you're going to be drained."

But the most profound change in Fryman's life came in the strike-shortened 1994 season.

"I was having the best year of my career when the strike hit," he said.

"When we stopped playing, I really had trouble dealing with it. Even though I had everything a young man could want – success, money, a great family – I was miserable. It was then that I realized my relationship with



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

A solid, all-around player with Detroit and now with Cleveland, Fryman says former manager Sparky Anderson (above) offered the infielder great advice as a young player.

God wasn't what it should be. My priorities were all out of whack. It was then that I committed my life to Christ. I started going to church regularly again, and got my priorities back in order."

And Fryman's teammates noticed. In 1995 Fryman got off to the worst start of his career.

"Kirk Gibson and I were close friends, because we had similar types of personalities," said Fryman. "I was hitting something like .200 over the first two months of the '95 season, and Kirk would say to me, 'I'm waiting. I'm waiting for you to snap. I know you want to.' But I said, 'No, it's not going to happen. I've taken stock of my life.

"I WAS HAVING THE BEST YEAR OF MY CAREER WHEN THE STRIKE HIT . . . I REALLY HAD TROUBLE DEALING WITH IT."

Travis Fryman

My relationship with God and with my wife and family is what's most important to me now. If I have lots of success in baseball, that's great, but if not, that's all right, too.'

"It's funny, because I got off to that terrible start in 1995, and it was almost like God was saying, 'Ok, you say you've changed, let's see it.' "

Throughout his career in Detroit, Fryman's career was characterized by its amazing consistency. Every year, like clockwork, he was good for an average somewhere around .275, with 20-25 home runs, and 80-100 RBI.

"One of the things I always liked most about Travis was his consistency," says Indians manager Charlie Manuel. "At the end of every season, he was always right there, with all his numbers."

"I guess there are two ways to look at it," says Fryman, who says that others are more impressed by his consistency than he is. "Either you got the most out of your ability every year, or else you have maxed out on your career."

And the latter is not something Fryman even wants to consider. Even with 10 years experience in the Major Leagues, he

says he's still learning new things every year. By no means is Fryman maxed out as a player.

"My only goals going into every season," he says, "are to do something every day to make myself a better player, and to do something every day to help us win the ballgame that day. If I am able to do those two things for an entire season, by the end of the year then statistically, I will have gotten exactly what I deserve."

Fryman says the nature of baseball's long season demands that day-by-day approach.

"You've got to concentrate on the struggle each day," he says. "If you look beyond that day, then you'll get caught up in the emotional roller coaster that this game can be."

All of this, Fryman learned as a young player, from all the veterans on the Tigers. And he, in turn, tries to pass it on to his younger Indians teammates.

"I talked to some of our Minor Leaguers this year," he says, "and one of the things I told them was that God gave you two ears and one mouth. That means you should listen twice as much as you talk. Listen and learn."

Fryman was a listener from way back.

"I've always been like that," he says. "When I first came up with the Tigers, I would make it a point to sit close to Sparky on the bench during games, so I could listen to him and learn about how he ran a game. At one point I remember him saying to me, 'You ask more questions than any young player I've ever known.' I said, 'That's because my father told me the only stupid question is the unasked question.' "

By the end of the 1997 season, Fryman could see his days in Detroit were numbered – not that it pleased him.

"I wanted to stay with the Tigers my whole career, like Trammell and Al Kaline did," said Fryman. "But they didn't want to make a commitment to me beyond the 1998 season, which would have been the last year of a five-year deal I had signed."

On November 18, 1997, the day of the expansion draft, to stock the

continued, see Travis Fryman, page 56

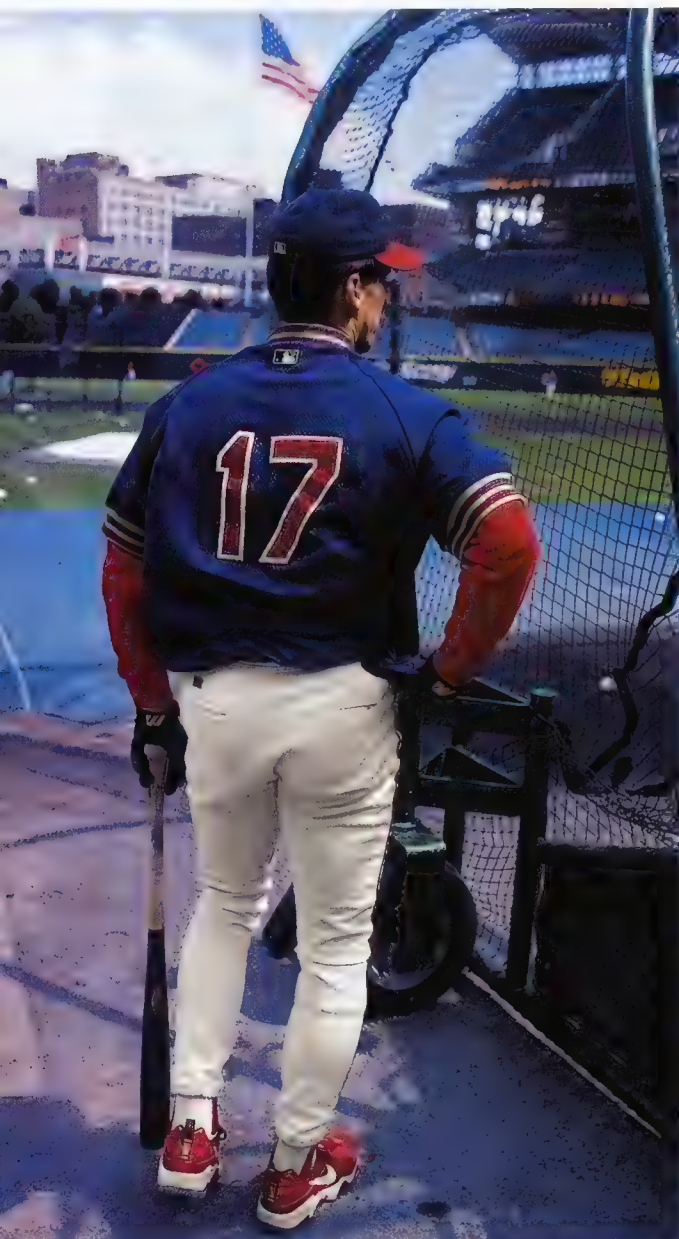


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

TRAVIS FRYMAN

continued from page 50

Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Devil Rays, the Tigers traded Fryman to Arizona for infielder Joe Randa, outfielder Gabe Alvarez, and Minor League pitcher Matt Drews.

"That didn't shock me much because I knew Detroit wanted to trade me," Fryman said. "And Arizona wasn't so bad. Buck Showalter, their manager, is from my hometown. I went to the same school as Jay Bell. Their hitting coach, Jim Presley, lives down the street from me. And as far as it being an expansion team, that didn't bother me. They were looking to build a franchise. I had been rebuilding my whole career in Detroit."

However, Fryman never got the chance to put on a Diamondbacks uniform. Two weeks after the expansion draft, the Indians traded Matt Williams to Arizona for Fryman and pitcher Tom Martin.

"The trade to Arizona didn't surprise me. But when Arizona traded me to



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Family day 1999 . . . despite injuries, Fryman was all smiles with wife, Kathleen, and sons (l to r) Branden and Mason.

Cleveland, that WAS a surprise," Fryman says. "But the more I thought about it, the happier I got. I was going to one of the best teams in the Major Leagues. Cleveland is three hours from Detroit, and Winter Haven is a half hour from Lakeland (the Tigers spring home), so all and all it couldn't have been an easier transition for me. I was tickled pink."

In his first season with the Indians in 1998, Fryman put up typical Fryman numbers: a .287 average, 28 home runs, and 96 RBI.

Last year Fryman battled injuries, spending time on the disabled list for the first time in his career due to back spasms and a torn ligament in his right knee.

He has rebounded this season, and is once again having another typical Fryman year, both offensively and defensively.



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Sun. May 14 vs. Kansas City 1:05PM	Sun. July 2 vs. Minnesota 1:05PM	Sat. Sept. 2 vs. Baltimore 1:05PM
Sat. May 20 vs. New York 1:05PM	Tues. July 4 vs. Toronto 1:05PM	Sun. Sept. 3 vs. Baltimore 1:05PM
Sun. May 21 vs. New York 1:05PM	Sat. July 15 vs. Pittsburgh 1:05PM	Sat. Sept. 9 vs. Chicago 1:05PM
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Sun. June 11 vs. Cincinnati 1:05PM	Sat. Aug. 5 vs. Anaheim 4:05PM	Sat. Sept. 30 vs. Toronto 1:05PM
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"¡NO PIERDAS NI UNA JUGADA!"

Fryman has also, in his quiet, professional way, developed into one of the Indians leaders in the clubhouse, a role players can't really pursue. It just happens. And Fryman's maturity and consistency, both in performance and personality, made him a natural for that role.

"I have some strong opinions on the way the game should be played, but I would never impose them on the younger players unless they ask," he says.

"I enjoy talking to them, and sometimes I'll seek out a guy to mention something to him."

If Fryman sounds like a manager-in-training, it could be. But he's not sure.

"I don't know if I'd want to manage some day or not," he says. "I enjoy talking baseball, learning about it, and teaching it. I guess I'll just have to see how things go."

At 31, Fryman should have several more productive years as a player in front of him. He has appeared in four All-Star games with the Tigers and two

Post Seasons with the Indians, but he still has not achieved every player's goal of winning the World Series.

Would he consider his career unfulfilled if he never won a World Series?

"Not at all," Fryman says. "All a player can do is get the most out of his ability, contribute to his team, and be a good teammate. If he's fortunate enough to be surrounded by a great team and they win a World Series, that's great. But to me, the only distasteful thing about it would be if a player got to the end of his career, then looked back and realized he cheated himself and his teammates because he didn't give his best effort every day. A player like that may feel like he wasted his career – and he should."

Because that player is certainly not *old school* – like Travis Fryman.

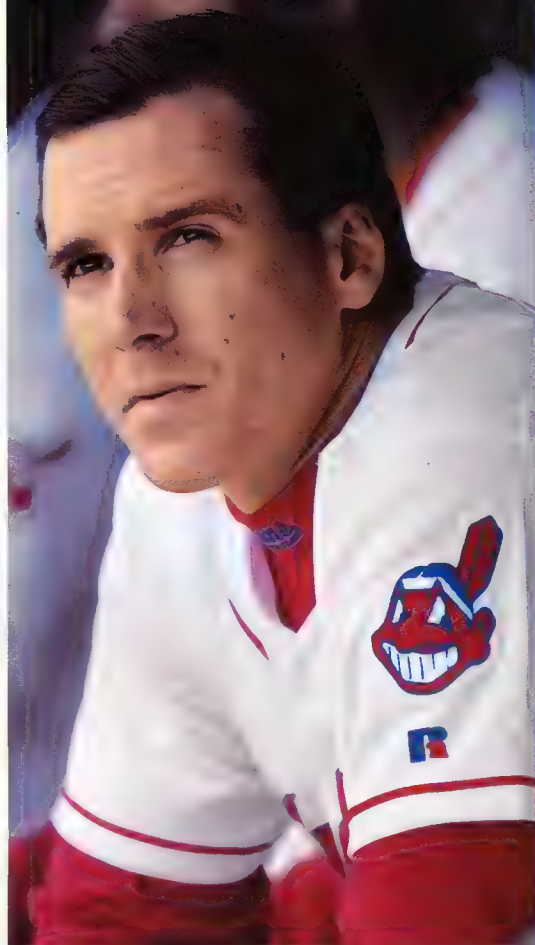


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The Alien

by Bill NEEDLE

Some call Einar Diaz, "The Alien," and not because he's a native of Panama. The nickname was given to the Indians catcher by fellow catcher, Sandy Alomar, Jr., himself Puerto Rican, so the monicker infers absolutely no national prejudice. It does, however, infer quite a bit about Diaz's physical make-up.

"The Alien" was conferred upon Diaz several off-seasons ago. "We were over in Berea, at the Browns training

complex," remembers Tribe Strength and Conditioning Coach, Fernando Montes. "We were working pretty hard and some of the guys were dragging, really whipped.

"All except Einar, that is. He just kept on running, like the Energizer Bunny. He just kept going and going and going. All the while, of course, with that smile on his face.

"Guys were screaming at him because he showed no signs of fatigue and he just kept smiling. That's when Sandy said, 'He must be an alien from another planet, or something.'

"He has so much endurance and strength you get the feeling if you opened him up, you'd see nothing but wires and computer chips."

Quite the contrary. Inside Einar Diaz one finds an unusual amount of warmth and a hunger for knowledge. In addition, a total grasp of his adopted language and culture allows him full expression, in English as well as Spanish, of thoughts and feelings about the emerging role he plays with the Indians.

He's in a touchy situation. Diaz's play in 1999 and 2000 would make him a regular on a majority of teams. Yet across the Indians clubhouse sits Alomar, six times an All-Star, the unquestioned leader



All photos: Gregory Drezdson

of the club and, along with the late Jim Hegan, one of the two best catchers in Indians history, perhaps even the best.

"I don't even think about that situation," Diaz says. "When I play, I play the best I can. When I don't play, I try to learn from Sandy. And I always try to keep myself ready to play."

There are things to be learned from Diaz, too. The strength and endurance that earned him his nickname translate into non-stop hustle. Whether it's out-running the batter down the baseline to back-up first base or exploding from his crouch to snare a pop-up or too-short bunt, Diaz hustles every second of the game.

"If you watch Diaz catch in a ballgame," said Gordie MacKenzie, his manager at Class A Kinston in 1995, "you would swear there was only one ball for the game. If that ball got away, there'd be no more game. So he's always running to get it. There's no walking around.

"I mean he's on the go all the time and he does it from Game One until the season is over. I don't know how he does it. Every night, it's the same way."

Blessed with an energetic nature, there's more to Diaz's attitude toward

his job than just his physical makeup. He's also absorbed quite a bit about how to play the game since starting to play at age 11, in the footsteps of his brother, Lino, a former Royals Minor Leaguer, now a coach in the Reds organization.

"You see things from other people's mistakes," Diaz says when asked about his perpetual hustle. "First, you see what can happen in a game when you hustle, or you don't hustle. A guy can drop a ball and if you hustle, you'll be safe. Sometimes, if they know you hustle all the time, you can make them drop the ball or make a bad throw.

"You can also see what happens to players who don't hustle. They usually don't get too far. They might have the talent but they don't hustle. I don't want to be like them."

In some cases, the thoughts and feelings of a Latin player aren't fully expressed to and understood by the English-speaking majority because of the language barrier. Some Latin players, who are thoughtful and articulate when interviewed in Spanish, may seem somewhat less so when speaking English, their second language.

Not so with Diaz. Early in his career, he decided to learn English the best he could – to become fully bilingual – which he has. But Diaz has taken the process a step further. His study of his second language includes reading, a skill not often polished by many Latin players who learn English.

"I was a good student in high school in Panama," Diaz says. "I graduated and then I signed. It was hard then to continue school, playing rookie ball and then winter ball in Venezuela. But I'm not done. I think it's never too late to go to school."

"That's one of the things that makes Einar so special," says Allen Davis, a native of Puerto Rico, the Indians Director of Community Relations, and Spanish play-by-play broadcaster, "his attitude toward becoming a part of the culture into which his life has taken him. That he wants to read English, not just speak it, indicates a special desire to get ahead in his world, as well as a confidence in his intelligence."



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

"I like to read," Diaz adds. "When I was in school, in Panama, I was in a private school where we had two hours of English a day. One hour, we read English. The other hour, we wrote it.

"And when I came over here for the first time, I got my little book and I'd read, then I'd write. I like to write letters, but for a couple years, I haven't been. But I'd like to get back to doing that."

Diaz's growth in the language is also helped by the influence of his wife, Leslie, a native-born American just hours away from a degree in Marine Biology from The University of South Carolina. They have a son, Tony, who is three years old.

"Being married to Leslie has helped me a lot," he says. "You don't feel so alone when there are words you don't know . . . you can ask and that's how you learn.

Serious about his hitting and catching – and his English – Einar Diaz is also known for his frequent and broad smiles.

"Plus in '93 and '94 we had a very good teacher in Spring Training who helped a lot of us with learning the language."

But if Diaz weren't a good catcher, it wouldn't matter if he could speak English like Sir Laurence Olivier. Originally a third baseman, it's Diaz's progress behind the plate since making the switch in 1993 that has brought him to the point where Indians fans don't have nightmares about 100-loss seasons should Sandy Alomar get hurt.

"Einar's doing a nice job," says Alomar. "When I first saw him a few years ago, I didn't know if he'd make it. Now, he's shown me he's a player. He's improved in everything. He's not real young (he's 27), but he's a young

catcher. With a young catcher you have to let time help you out, and you have to gain experience.

"He can be good defensively. He's got the quickness, he's short. He doesn't have to wear himself out blocking balls because of being short. He could be great with more experience."

Unfortunately, Diaz's experience has come at the cost of Alomar's injuries. In 1999, knee surgery sidelined Alomar for four months, allowing Diaz to play in 119 games in which he hit .281. This season, with hamstring ailments hampering Alomar in the early going, Diaz saw his batting average hover around .320 for much of April and May.

Some outside the Indians organization would relish a controversy over the catching position. Within the clubhouse, however, everyone knows Alomar is the starter and Diaz is the backup.

"Sandy is the guy," said Diaz at Spring Training. He's the man and I'm fine with that. I understand that. For me, last year was a good time to get experience and I saw a lot of hitters and worked on blocking balls and stuff like that. But I still think I have more to learn."

There is much more to Diaz than just the story of his waiting behind Sandy Alomar. His throwing, thought by many to be his greatest asset apart from his attitude, was the reason he was shifted to catcher. Major League teams want their first and third basemen, their "corner" players, to hit for average and power. Diaz did little of either in his early seasons in the Tribe farm system.

"You don't see many guys make it to the big leagues just because they are good defensive third basemen," says Indians Assistant General Manager Mark Shapiro. As a third baseman early in his career, Diaz led the Appalachian League in fielding and assists while as a catcher, he's become a Major Leaguer.

"It wasn't a difficult choice to become a catcher when they told me I was being shifted," Diaz says. "I wasn't upset, no. They told me becoming a catcher would be the fastest way to get to the big leagues. So I said, 'I'll take [the change].' Now look where I am.

Einar credits wife, Leslie, (pictured right with Einar and their son, Tony) as a large part of the reason he has made such great progress in mastering English.

"But it was hard the first two years. I never played with the mask and the shin guards and the helmet. In the Minor Leagues, you carry your own equipment. I was forgetting some part of my equipment every day," he says with a laugh.

The laugh. The smile. It's a toss-up among those close to the Indians whether it's Diaz's hustle or his smile that's his most endearing quality. Anybody who can keep a smile on his face during the workouts orchestrated by Montes, an ex-Marine, has no trouble dealing with the day-to-day life at baseball's highest level.

"I believe the only – and I mean only – time I have not seen a smile on Einar Diaz's face was that game Pedro Martinez was throwing at him," says Tribe voice Tom Hamilton. "Call him affable, or cordial, or whatever. The guy always seems like he's in a good mood."

The son of a steel plant worker and a stay-at-home mother, Diaz's nature seems to be a result of a close-knit home life. In some families, the younger brother of a professional ballplayer might feel overwhelmed having to live up to the accomplishments of his older brother. In other families, an older brother whose accomplishments are surpassed by a younger brother might feel some resentment. Nothing was farther from reality in the case of older brother Lino and younger brother Einar.

"My brother was so happy for me when I made it to the Majors," Einar says. "He was real proud. He told me, 'I'm going to go have a couple of beers for you to celebrate.' He wasn't jealous I made it. He was proud."

While many so-called experts suggest Diaz's emergence signals the end of Alomar's star-crossed stay with the Indians, Diaz's presence will actually



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

extend Alomar's career. At the start of the 2000 campaign, Charlie Manuel intended for Alomar to catch four or five of every seven games with Diaz handling the rest in day games after night games or in series played on artificial turf. Resting Alomar, Manuel figured, would keep Sandy fresher while allowing Diaz to gain valuable experience.

Alomar's tender hamstrings in April and May thrust Diaz into the starter's role more than Manuel had planned. Diaz's acquisition of experience came at a faster pace because of Alomar's injuries, and his performance improved because of them.

"When Einar got here, he wasn't really sure of himself," said Paul Shuey. "He had a great arm, but he was just fair defensively. Now, he's one of the best defensive catchers I've ever had behind the plate."

It's too early in Diaz's catching career to speculate whether he'll join Alomar and Hegan as one of the best backstops in Indians annals. But if effort and intelligence, combined with quickness and a great arm, are what it takes, it wouldn't be foreign to imagine him as one of the best.

But it would be alien to his nature if he didn't smile about it.

ied in the cemetery at nearby Christ Episcopal Church.

The town is surrounded by hills on its northern brow of the Catskills. Beyond are rolling fields and valleys, dotted with farmhouses and barns around each bend, and over each knoll. It's rural America.

The entire community is picture-perfect, and there seems to be an air of pleasant tolerance for the thousands of tourists who cram the streets and sidewalks. We drove every side street in town, saw wonderful 19th century restored homes, marveled at the cleanliness, and felt this would be a nice place to live.

While Cooperstown is synonymous with baseball, there are many enjoyable activities and sightseeing. Morning breakfast at the Otesaga Hotel is a tasty and leisurely way to start any day. Further down the road along the lake is the Fenimore House Museum, an American folk art museum built on the site of James Fenimore Cooper's original lakeside home. Across the road is the

Farmer's Museum, a recreation of life in the 1800s.

On the other side of town is Fernleigh, the lush acreage and greenhouses owned by the Clark family. They are the benefactors of the town; underwrite many endeavors; subsidized the baseball Hall of Fame; provide plants, flowers, and greenery to all the public buildings; and are the ones to thank for the beautiful flower baskets that adorn Main Street. The Clark family earned much of its wealth through a 50 percent stake in I.M. Singer & Company (the sewing machine maker) purchased before the Civil War.

Across from Fernleigh is the Clark Sports Center. It is here, on the outside grounds under a big tent, that the annual Hall of Fame induction ceremonies are held. The public is welcome, and the area is big enough for whatever size crowd.

There are plenty of places to dine. Downtown eateries range from a small diner for breakfast and lunch, to the moderate Italian restaurant "Italy," and

the more upscale Gabriella's on the Square. About a mile south of town is the Pepper Mill, with a wide selection of reasonably priced meals. Along the lake is the Otesaga Hotel, which is upscale, but has a grand breakfast buffet.

Inasmuch as parking is so difficult during the summer months, catch the Cooperstown Trolley. Park at one of the free lots around the perimeter of downtown, pay for all-day privileges, and you can get on and off as you please. The trolley stops at the major attractions and in downtown on a day-long schedule.

There are lots of places to stay in and around the village. The Otesaga Hotel is the most prestigious address, but there are also gracious inns, little motels, and quite a few excellent bed and breakfasts.

For more information, contact the Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce at 31 Chestnut Street, Cooperstown, New York 13326, by telephone at 607.547.9983, or at: www.cooperstownchamber.org.



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Photos: Gregory Drezdron



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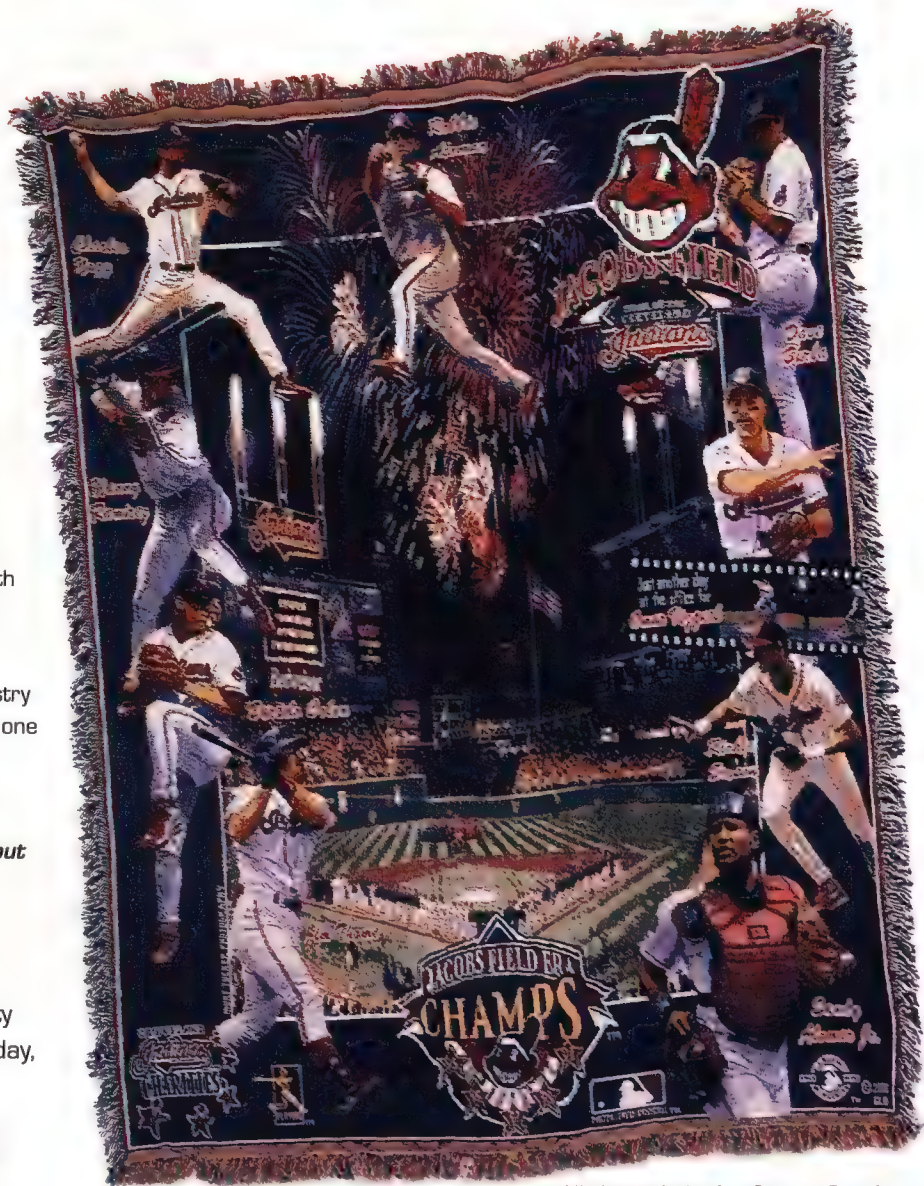
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All player photos by: Gregory Drezdson

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Weekly auctions begin each Monday at 3PM and run until noon the following Monday. The highest bidders at the conclusion of each weekly auction will be contacted via e-mail by the Indians for payment arrangements.

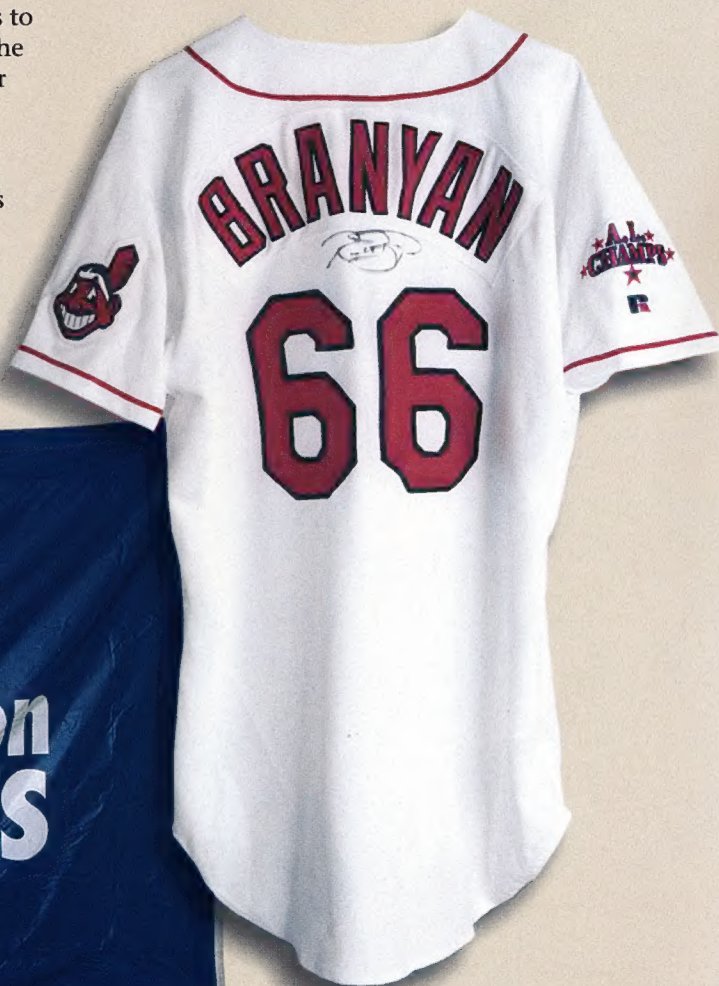
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All proceeds benefit Cleveland Indians Charities which supports youth education and recreation programs in the Greater Cleveland area.

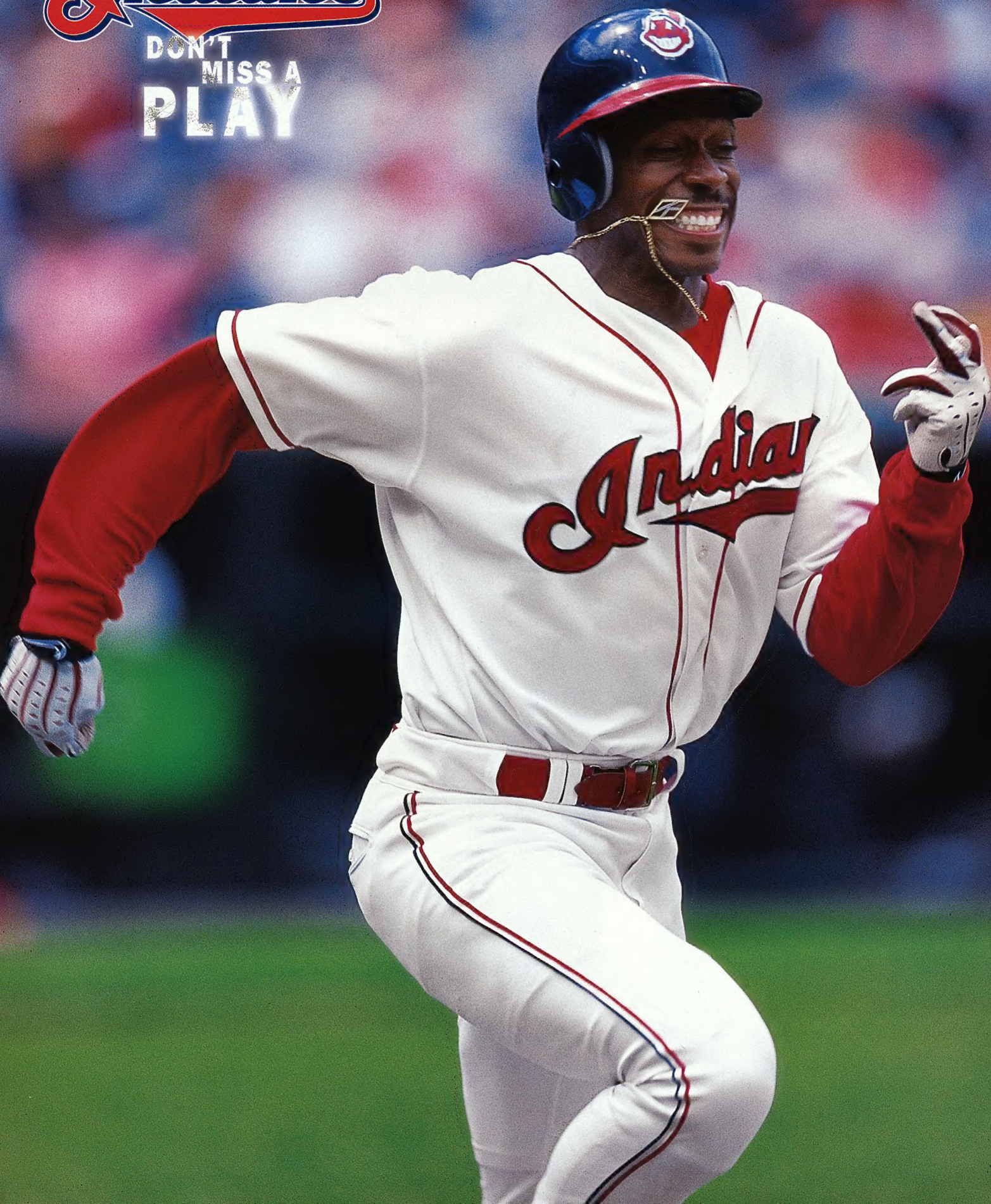
Auction items will vary each week, but may include banners, autographed jerseys, bats, helmets, and photographs.

Photo: Gregory Drezdon

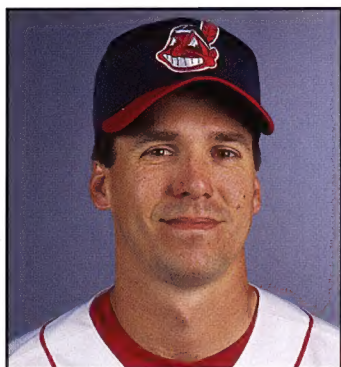


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**Travis
FRYMAN** **17**

Age: 31, born March 25, 1969
in Lexington, KY

Position: Infielder

B/T: R/R Ht: 6'1" Wt: 195

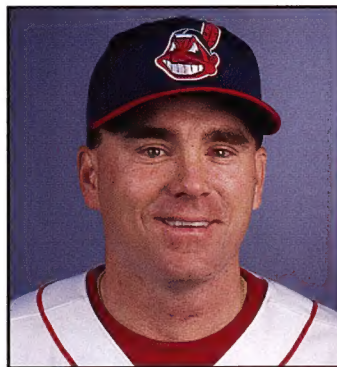


**David
JUSTICE** **23**

Age: 34, born April 14, 1966
in Cincinnati, OH

Position: Outfielder

B/T: L/L Ht: 6'3" Wt: 200



**Scott
KAMIENIECKI** **30**

Age: 36, born April 19, 1964
in Mt. Clemens, MI

Position: Pitcher

B/T: R/R Ht: 6'0" Wt: 200



**Steve
KARSAY** **20**

Age: 28, born March 24, 1972
in Flushing, NY

Position: Pitcher

B/T: R/R Ht: 6'3" Wt: 209



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Our
DYNAMIC
Duo

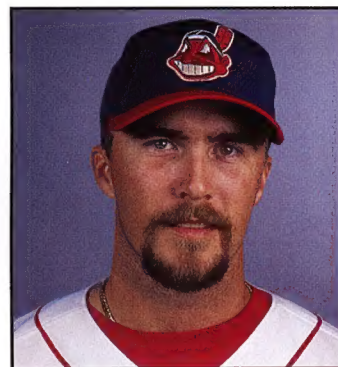


**Kenny
LOFTON** **7**

Age: 33, born May 31, 1967
in East Chicago, IN

Position: Outfielder

B/T: L/L Ht: 6'0" Wt: 180

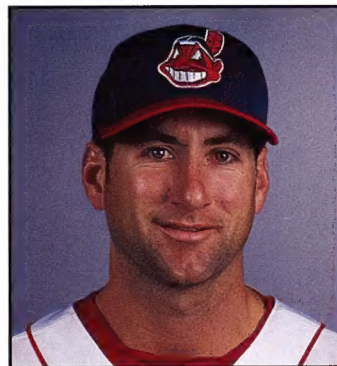


**Tom
MARTIN** **36**

Age: 30, born May 21, 1970
in Charleston, SC

Position: Pitcher

B/T: L/L Ht: 6'1" Wt: 200



**Charles
NAGY** **41**

Age: 33, born May 5, 1967
in Fairfield, CT

Position: Pitcher

B/T: L/R Ht: 6'3" Wt: 200



**Jaime
NAVARRO** **37**

Age: 32, born March 27, 1968
in Bayamon, PR

Position: Pitcher

B/T: R/R Ht: 6'0" Wt: 250

Indians Shortstop • Omar Vizquel #13

